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## ABSTRACT

The materials presented here are visual aids used in a presentation on citizenship instruction for older and physically challenged adults. They consist of a series of "screens" containing information on: demographic information on samples of citizenship students in 1995 and 1997, illustrating changes in the population; motivations of and barriers faced by the new population; effects of aging that have implications for the classroom; visual, hearing, and learning challenges for older learners, and classroom solutions for them; challenges from other sources, including poor study skills and literacy problems; the citizenship teacher's challenge; ways to address physical issues in the classroom environment; ways to address motivation and lifestyle challenges; a performance contract for students; a sample letter to the student's family affirming participation in citizenship learning; a sample unit outline; notes on possible classroom learning aids; sample visual aids for a unit on the three branches of the federal government; classroom procedures for dictation, testing, and use of realia; and a brief list of World Wide Web resources. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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# *Citizenship Instruction for Older and Challenged Students*

*Patricia Petherbridge-Hernandez, Ph.D.  
Kathleen P. O'Donnell, Ph.D.*

*Authors: Passport to Success in the U.S.: Citizenship  
J. Weston Walch, Publisher*

TESOL '98 *Citizenship Instruction for Older and Challenged Students*

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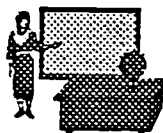
## Agenda

- Introduction
- Who are the new citizenship students?
- Strategies for the cohort's needs
- Strategies for teaching citizenship topics
- Resources

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## Changes...



New strategies

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### Who are the new students?

## 1995/1997 Demographics-Sample

	Total enrolled	Drop-outs	18-30	31-50	50+
1995	2221	781 (35%)	90 (4%)	617 (28%)	733 (33%)
1997	2253	392 (17%)	77 (3%)	779 (35%)	1005 (45%)

Total did not change substantially

- Drop-outs decreased by half
- 18-30 decreased slightly
- 31-50 increased
- 50+ increased from 33 to 45% of the total

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### Who are the new students?

## Who are the new students?

- Impelled to become citizens by loss of benefits
- Often did not pursue citizenship previously due to numerous barriers
- Now, they must face challenges or lose benefits



Between a rock and a hard place...

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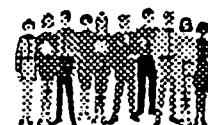
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### Who are the new students?

## What barriers do they face?

- Less formal education
- Previous negative formal learning experiences
- Work/family concerns
- Age/illness/infirmity



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## What are effects of aging?

### Age affects all facets of the person:

- Appearance
- Musculoskeletal system
- Cardiovascular system
- Respiratory system
- Excretory system
- Endocrine system
- Reproductive system
- Nervous system

*These changes have an impact on classroom performance.*



## Challenges for older learners

### Sight issues

- Visual acuity
- Clarity
- Focusing capacity
- Dark/light adaptation capacity

### Thought/learning/ memory issues

- In processing capacity (storage)
- In recall (memory)

### Hearing issues

- Reduction in speech discrimination
- Performance deficit with background noise or speech that is sped up

*What are the implications for the classroom?*

## Classroom solutions

### Sight issues

- On the board, use large letters.
- Keep distance from board to a minimum.
- When using video or projection in a darkened room, allow time for adjustment to light changes.

### Hearing issues

- Keep background noise to a minimum.
- Speak slowly and distinctly.

### Thought/learning/ memory issues

- Repetition and review of content
- Mnemonic devices

## Challenges from other barriers

- Discomfort with learning process
- Poor study skills
- Literacy issues (not just English literacy)
- Negative self-concept
- No time to study
- No family support
- No internal motivation

## Teacher's challenge

### Student challenges

- Physical impairments
- Semi-literacy
- Lack of motivation
- Self-concept issues
- Lifestyle issues
- Need for citizenship



### Citizenship skills

- English oral & written proficiency
- Knowledge of US History
- Knowledge of US government

## Addressing physical issues

- Have students sit in front to see and hear better.
- Pair with student who can assist.
- Use large print.
- Speak up, speak clearly, repeat.
- Encourage taping, requests to slow down.
- Encourage standing during class if needed.
- Take short breaks in long sessions.

## Addressing motivation

- Ask students for benefits of citizenship, list them; add more; post the list; review
- Affirmation: "I will be an American citizen." Every class. Post a banner.
- Remind students that while studying is short-term, the benefits are permanent.

## Addressing lifestyle issues

- Discuss time management:
  - Provide a recommended amount of study.
  - Ask students to figure out what times they can study: on the bus, while baby-sitting, instead of TV.
  - Discuss basic time management tips.
  - Different ways to study: listen to tapes, review materials, write sentences, etc.
- Provide a contract identifying goal, commitment, benefits.
- Provide a letter to family members asking for support, identifying benefits to the family

## Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will be an American citizen. I will do this because I want to:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

To do this, I will study at least \_\_\_\_\_  
I will study \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

## Letter to family

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Your relative, \_\_\_\_\_, will be an American citizen. S/He will do this because:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

S/he will study at least \_\_\_\_\_. S/he needs your support and encouragement.

Please help him/her study. Help him/her have time to study and go to class.

When s/he is a citizen, the whole family will benefit. S/he can do it!

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## Address learning issues

- Use strategies that build success:
  - Break every concept and task into small steps.
  - Constantly check to verify learning is occurring (*many cultural, social, or personal barriers prevent students from admitting they don't understand*).
  - Review class with "What did we learn today?" Each student who responds is applauded.
  - Use praise, body language, tone of voice and other positive reinforcement to create a positive atmosphere.
  - Atmosphere that making mistakes in class is OK.
  - Take more time than for classes with less challenged students.

## Address learning issues (cont.)

Structure the class to help challenged learners:

⇒ Affirmation: *I will be an American citizen.*

⇒ Preview of the day's lesson

⇒ Content learning in *themed* segments:

- vocabulary
- content, using realia
- dictation practice

*Positive reinforcement throughout*

⇒ Review of the day's lesson

⇒ Homework assignment or study reminder

## Sample theme: Pilgrims

**Vocabulary:** Discuss, have students make flash cards

**Content:** Story of the Pilgrims; read, summarize orally in own words, discussion

**Realia:** Calendar, pictures of Pilgrims, first Thanksgiving

**Practice:** True/False, Short answer, Puzzles, Multiple choice questions selected from the 100; Have students make flash cards of questions

**Dictation:** vocabulary, phrases, dictations from practice list

**Homework:** Complete cards, study, next assignment

## Learning aids: help & fun

- Home-made flash cards & tapes
- Memory aids
- Charts and Tables to organize information
- Role plays
- Puzzles
- WWW



## Flash cards and tapes

- Students buy index cards—2 colors; make as you go
- 1st color: vocabulary words
  - English on front, their language on back
- 2nd color: 100 practice questions
  - Question on front, answer on back
- Make as you go
- Allow students to tape dictation
- Another set of cards could be for dictation

## Memory aid—13 colonies

- 3 with "New"
  - New York, New Jersey, New Hampshire
- 6 with women's names
  - Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Delaware
- 3 long names
  - Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania
- 1 island: Rhode Island

## Charts and Tables

## Role play—3 branches

### Constitution



Legislative

A student or group of students acts as Congress and passes a tax law. They hand a piece of paper with the law on it to the "President."



Executive

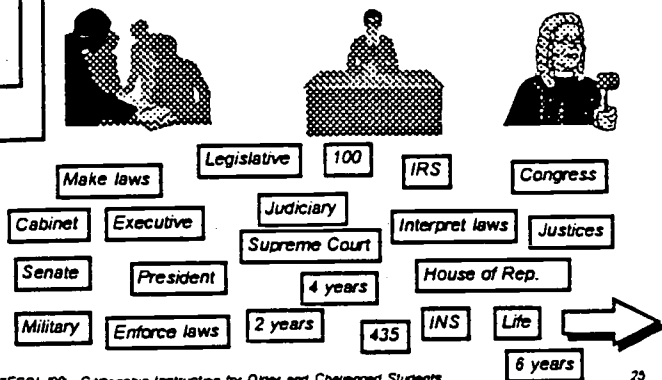
The "President" signs the paper. He asks a student acting as an IRS agent to get the taxes from a taxpayer.



Judiciary

A taxpayer thinks the tax is not constitutional and asks a judge to decide.

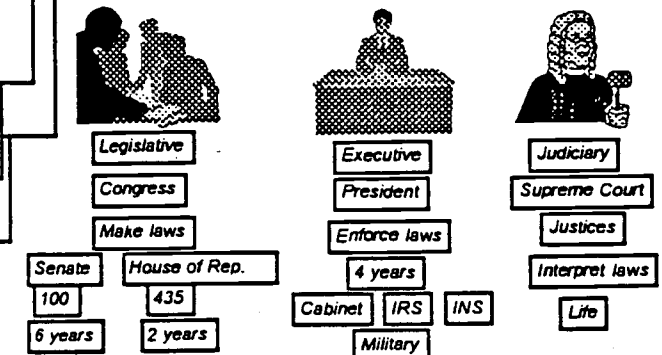
## Puzzle—3 branches



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## Puzzle—3 branches: answer



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## Dictation practice

- Begin with single words
- Advance to phrases
- Finally, use actual practice sentences
- Try to use different speakers
- Encourage students to tape someone reading the questions so that they can practice on their own. *(If they each get a different speaker, they can trade tapes with each other for more practice.)*

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## Test-taking practice

- Begin simulation of real test as course progresses, easier to more difficult
- Practice answering on actual answer sheet

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## Realia and tools

- Realia kit
  - Flag
  - Tape of anthem, pledge of allegiance
  - Pictures of monuments, leaders
  - Scantron forms
  - Pictures of money showing presidents
  - Calendar for holidays
  - Documents
  - Telephone book
- Other tools
  - Banner: "I will be an American citizen."
  - Index cards with questions
  - Vocabulary cards
  - Role play items
  - Tapes of different speakers doing dictation

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## WWW Resources

- [www.ins.usdoj.gov](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov)
  - Has interactive test, study guides
- [www.casas.org/09Citizenship/09CitMaster.html](http://www.casas.org/09Citizenship/09CitMaster.html)
- [www.usia.gov/usa/usa.htm](http://www.usia.gov/usa/usa.htm)
  - Lots of information and links
- [www.mindspring.com/~citizenship/links.html](http://www.mindspring.com/~citizenship/links.html)
- [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)
- [www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Welcome.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Welcome.html)
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